



### What is the Food Stamp Program?

The Food Stamp Program helps people with little or no income buy nutritious food. Food stamp benefits are not cash. They come on an electronic card that you use like a bank card to buy food. Most grocery stores take food stamp benefits.

### Can I get food stamp benefits?

To get food stamp benefits, your income and your other resources have to be under certain limits.

- **Income:** Your total income, before taxes or any other subtractions, is called *gross income*. However, the program allows certain subtractions from your gross income, called *deductions*. These can be for things you pay for like housing costs, child support payments, medical expenses over \$35 a month for elderly or disabled people, or child-care costs. The amount left over after these deductions is called *net income*.

There are two income limits: gross income and net income. If your household has a person who is 60 or older or who is disabled, you only need to meet the net income limit. If everyone in your household receives SSI or TANF, you do not need to meet any of the income limits. Most households must meet both gross and net income limits.

Look at the income table to find out what the gross and net income limits are for food stamp benefits. The amounts in this table are good from October 1, 2005, to September 30, 2006.

| People in Household | Gross Monthly Income* | Net Monthly Income* |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1                   | \$ 1,037              | \$ 798              |
| 2                   | 1,390                 | 1,070               |
| 3                   | 1,744                 | 1,341               |
| 4                   | 2,097                 | 1,613               |
| 5                   | 2,450                 | 1,855               |
| 6                   | 2,803                 | 2,156               |
| 7                   | 3,156                 | 2,428               |
| 8                   | 3,509                 | 2,700               |

*\*Larger households can have more income. Amounts are higher in Alaska and Hawaii. People who receive SSI in California are not eligible.*

- **Resources:** Your resources are things like bank accounts. To qualify for food stamp benefits, your household may have up to \$2,000 in resources. If your household has a person who is 60 or older or who is disabled, you may have up to \$3,000 in resources.

The resources of people who receive TANF or SSI do not count. Your home does not count as a resource. In some States, at least one car does not count as a resource. Talk to your local food stamp office for more information.

One way to see if you might be able to get food stamps is to go to **www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov** on the internet. Answer the questions. If it looks like you might be eligible, you will find out how much you could receive. But to find out for sure, you must apply.

### How do I apply for food stamp benefits?

If you think you might be eligible for food stamp benefits and want to apply, you need to:

- Call or go to the local food stamp office for an application. You can ask them to mail you the application or you can get the application online at **www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/coalition/map.htm**.
- Fill out the application as much as you can. Put your name and address on the form and sign it.
- Return the application to the local office online, by mail, or fax; or take it back to the local office.
- Have an interview. You can do your interview over the phone. You can also have a friend or relative go to the interview in your place.
- Show the local office papers like pay stubs, rent or mortgage payments, utility bills, child or elder care bills, and child support court orders. The local office can tell you exactly what papers and other information you will need to support your income and expenses.

After reviewing your application, the local office worker will tell you if you qualify and how much you will receive.

### How do I find my local office?

If you need help finding your local food stamp office, call 1-800-221-5689. This Web page can also help you find your local office: **http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/coalition/map.htm**.

### Do I need a Social Security number?

Yes, you must get a Social Security number if you want food stamp benefits. Not all people in the household have to join the program. People in the household who do not want food stamp benefits do not have to give a Social Security number. But they do have to give their financial information.





Can I get food stamp benefits if I am not working?

Yes, but if you are able to work, you must look for work, take a job, or go to training.

Can legal noncitizens get food stamp benefits?

Maybe. Ask your food stamp worker. Even if you can't get benefits, household members born in this country can. Getting food stamp benefits won't hurt you if you want to become a citizen.

If I am eligible, how much can I get?

Look at the table below to see the most you can get if you have no income. As your income goes up, your food stamp benefits go down. The amounts in this table are good from October 1, 2005, to September 30, 2006.

| People in Household | Maximum Monthly Allotment* |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 1                   | \$ 152                     |
| 2                   | 278                        |
| 3                   | 399                        |
| 4                   | 506                        |
| 5                   | 601                        |
| 6                   | 722                        |
| 7                   | 798                        |
| 8                   | 912                        |

*\*Larger households get higher amounts. Amounts are higher in Alaska and Hawaii. People who receive SSI in California are not eligible.*

Where can I get more information?

Call your local food stamp office.  
Call the national food stamp information line at 1-800-221-5689.  
**Visit [www.fns.usda.gov/fsp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp).**

How can my family eat better?

You want the best for your family. You want everyone to stay well and for your kids to grow and learn. Using food stamp benefits to purchase healthy foods for your family can help make this happen.



- Try these tips to help your family eat better and stay healthy:
- Vary your vegetables...dark green, orange, peas and beans.
  - Focus on fruits. Choose fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruit.
  - Eat at least 3 ounces of whole-grain cereal, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta every day.
  - Choose lean meats and milk products that are lower in fat.
  - Make physical activity a regular part of your day.

For more information on healthy eating go to **[www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)**.

Food Stamps Make America Stronger.

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